

A Highlight on Professor Audrey Bilger **By Shree Pandya '14 and Wendalyn Tran '14**

For its first faculty focus, the Women and Leadership Alliance would like to recognize Professor Audrey Bilger, one of the most acclaimed professors and prominent leaders on campus.

In 1994, Professor Audrey Bilger came to Claremont McKenna College as an Assistant Professor of Literature, after two years in a visiting position at Oberlin College. Her scholarship focuses on comic theory, feminist theory, and Jane Austen and her contemporaries. Professor Bilger recently gave a talk at the Athenaeum titled *From Jane Austen to Feminist Hulk* that combined these diverse disciplines. She explained the resemblance of an 18th century author to a green, patriarchy-smashing online superhero for a unique, informative, and comic evening.

Her classes are some of the most sought out, and students have said very positive things about her teaching. Faith Hanna ('14) stated, "Professor Bilger is a marvelous professor...she places a great deal of effort in establishing a personal connection with her students [and]... She does her very best to make her classes engaging and interactive, which goes a long way in providing a lively and effective educational environment."

Her leadership includes being the Faculty Director of the Center for Writing and Public Discourse, an institution that focuses on encouraging students and faculty to "consider writing in all its aspects." Originally known as the Writing Center, the Center has transformed to include more than just consulting sessions for students to improve their writing abilities. The Center now sponsors a workshop series titled *The Craft of Writing*, highlighting professionals from various careers who utilize writing every day to be successful. Furthermore, Professor Bilger helped to transform Literature 10 into the Freshmen Writing Seminar, where freshmen not only receive a greater focus on writing but even receive their own Academic Mentor from the Claremont Graduate University or other graduate programs. Not surprisingly, she considers the Center as one of her greatest accomplishments at CMC. "I'm proud of what's going on with the Center. We are creating a space for students to develop as writers. Our Consultants care deeply about writing. Everyone at the Center is doing great work."

Her leadership also includes being the Faculty Advisor for both the Women's Forum and AQUA (Alliance for Queer Understanding and Appreciation), co-coordinating the Gender and Women's Studies Sequence, and serving on various committees at CMC and as part of Intercollegiate Women's Studies. She is a frequent contributor to *Ms. Magazine*, an important forum for feminist issues and views, and is particularly well-known for her *Ms.* blog coverage of Feminist Hulk, a Twitter persona that advocates for gender equality and social justice.

Despite her multiple involvements on and off campus, she still has the time to make valuable contributions to the scholarly world. In March 2012, she will release her latest work, titled *Here Come the Brides!: Reflections on Lesbian Love and Marriage*. Co-authored by Michele Kort, senior editor at *Ms. Magazine*, *Here Come the Brides!* is an anthology of essays, plays, cartoons and poetry that looks at lesbian marriage in the early 21st century. According to Professor Bilger, "The real-life stories included in the book provide a snapshot of lesbian marriage at the dawn of marriage equality. By focusing on women, the book presents a new chapter in the history of marriage's evolution from a patriarchal, structurally oppressive institution to a shared partnership between two equals."

Without Professor Bilger, CMC would not be the same. She serves as a leader, role model, and mentor while positively contributing to the campus in tremendous ways. In fact, she was the first female faculty to receive tenure in the Literature Department at CMC. Her leadership and strong connection with the students have made her highly esteemed. As Victoria Nichols ('14) states, "she is the best!"